In the Name of Allah,
the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

قال الله تعالى:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ ٱلرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ ٱلْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

Indeed, Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification. (*Sūrah al-Aḥzāb* 33:33).

Prophetic traditions, mentioned in most reliable Sunnī and Shīʿite reference books of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic Exegesis), confirm that this holy Qur'ānic verse was revealed to exclusively involve the five People of the Mantle; namely, Muḥammad, ʻAlī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon them, to whom the term "Ahl al-Bayt (People of the House)" is solely dedicated.

For instance, refer to the following references:

(1) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), *al-Musnad*, 1:331; 4:107; 6:292, 304. (2) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (d. 261 AH), 7:130. (3) Al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361 et al. (4) Al-Dūlābī (d. 310 AH), *al-Dhurriyyah al-Ṭāhirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. 108. (5) Al-Nassā'ī (d. 303 AH), *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 5: p. 108, 113. (6) Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405 AH), *al-Mustadrak ʻalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146, 147. (7) Al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH), *al-Burhān*, p. 197. (8) Ibn Hājar al-ʻAsqalānī (d. 852), *Fatḥ al-Barī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7:104.

As for Shīʿite reference books of *ḥadīth*, refer to the following references:

(1) Al-Kulaynī (d. 328 AH), *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 1:287. (2) Ibn Bābawayh (d. 329 AH), *al-Imāmah wa'l-Tabṣirah*, p. 47, Ḥ. 29. (3) Al-Maghribī (d. 363 AH), *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, pp. 35, 37. (4) Al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH), *al-Khiṣāl*, pp. 403, 550. (5) al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), *al-Amālī*, Ḥ. 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy Qur'ānic verse involved in the following reference books of *tafsīr*: (1) Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (2) Al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH), *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*. (3) Al-Waḥīdī (d. 468 AH), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. (4) Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH), *Zād al-Masīr*. (5) Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), *al-Jāmiʻ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*. (6) Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (7) Al-Thaʿālibī (d. 825 AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (8) Al-Suyūtī (d. 911 AH), *al-Durr al-Manthūr*. (9) al-Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH), *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*. (10) Al-ʻAyyāshī (d. 320 AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (11) Al-Qummī (d. 329 AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (12) Furāt al-Kūfī (d. 352 AH), *Book of Tafsīr*; in the margin of the exegesis of verse 4:59. (13) Al-Ṭabrisī (d. 560 AH), *Majmaʻ al-Bayān*, as well as many other reference books of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*.

The Appropriate Way
to Await the Twelfth Imam

قَالَ رَسُو ﷺ:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللهِ وَعِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي أَبَداً، وَإِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said:

"Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [*thaqalayn*]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [*'itrah*], the members of my Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [*ḥawḍ*] (of *Kawthar*)."

Some references:

Al-Ḥākim al-Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533

Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (English translation), book 31, *ḥadīths* 5920-3

At-Tirmidhī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, *ḥadīths* 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219

Al-Nassā'ī, *Khaṣā'iṣ 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, *ḥadīth* 79

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190

Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1, p. 277

Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, vol. 5, p. 209

Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 6, p. 199

Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥah* (Kuwait: Al-Dar al-Salafiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358

THE APPROPRIATE WAY TO AWAIT THE TWELFTH IMAM

Ayatullah Muhammad Mahdi al-Asifi

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PREFACE

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the ummah (Muslim community) with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household (‘a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and

thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shī ‘ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shī ‘ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet’s Household (‘a) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdī, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Ayatullah Muhammad Mahdi al Asifi the author of the present book, and Mr. Seyed Shiraz Husain Agha, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office.

Cultural Affairs Department

Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

﴿ ولَقَد كَتَبنَا في الزَّبُورِ من بَعد الذكرِ أنَّ
الأرضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَالِحُونَ ﴾

"Certainly, We wrote in the Psalms after the Torah: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth."

Anbiya: 105

[A Study of the Connection between Waiting for the Imam and the Revolutionary Movement that precedes his Advent]

Awaiting the Mahdi has a vital connection with the revolutionary movement that will precede his reappearance, since the latter is a result of the former and the latter is what will strengthen the former. God willing, we will first discuss the relation that this awaiting has with the reappearance of the Mahdi and then examine what connection his revolution has with the way in which we await his reappearance.[1]

The Relation that Exists Between Awaiting the Savior and the Revolutionary Movement that will Precede his Reappearance

A Psychological Explanation for the Awaiting of the Savior

There are some people who like to believe that awaiting a messiah or savior is a psychological malady that has afflicted the underprivileged class of society throughout history. They say that it is a means of by which these people escape from the bitter reality that they are faced with, and which propels them into an imaginary future where these deprived people will be able to reclaim their lost rights and acquire honor and nobility. They are thus dreaming, even though wide awake, and seek to run away from the actuality that they are afflicted with into a fantasy.

A Criticism of the Abovementioned Explanation

This explanation of the problem of awaiting the savior is not scientifically accurate by any means. This will

1- The views reflected in this book do not necessarily reflect that of the translator.

become clear for anyone who examines it historically and pays attention to the fact that it is something that is firmly rooted in the most popular religious beliefs throughout the history of human beings.

Awaiting the Savior in the Secular Schools of Thought

Awaiting a savior or salvation is something that goes beyond religion. It is something that we can find in the secular schools of thought and ideologies such as Marxism. Bertrand Russell has stated: "Awaiting [a savior][1] is something that is not particular to religions. Rather, even [secular] schools of thought and ideologies await the appearance of an individual who will spread justice throughout the land." As Russell says, awaiting [a savior] in Marxist ideology is of the same nature as the awaiting that we find in Christianity. Awaiting the savior in Tolstoy's opinion is similar to the concept that we find in Christianity, except that he differs from Christians in the angle from which he presents this problem.

Awaiting the Savior in the Eyes of Religion that Preceded Islam

We read the following in the Old Testament:

"There will be no respite for the evil people and the tyrants. Verily those who await the justice of God will inherit the land and the accursed will be scattered about. It is the righteous ones who will become heir to the land and will live therein until the end of the world."

1- Text that the reader finds between [ ] are explanations of the translator given to make the meaning of the content more clear.

This is a reality that Psalm # 37 of the Psalms of David clearly states and which has also been mentioned thus in the Holy Qur'an:

"Certainly, We wrote in the Psalms after the Torah: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth."[1]

Awaiting the Savior According to Sunni Muslims

Awaiting the Mahdi is not something that is particular to the Shia Muslims. Consecutively transmitted hadith (*mutawatir*) have been narrated by the Sunnis [regarding this topic] with correct (*sahih*) chains of transmission in which there can be no doubt (in the same way that they have been narrated through Shia chains of transmission). Abdul Rahman ibn Khaldun, one of the famous scholars of the eighth century, in his famous introduction to the Book, *Lessons*, says the following: "Know that it is celebrated amongst all Muslims, throughout the ages, that, at the end of time, a man will definitely appear from the Family of the Prophet (s) who will help religion and establish justice. All the Muslims will follow his statute and he will take control of the Islamic nations. His name will be 'Mahdi'. Also, the other incidents that condition his appearance, mentioned in correctly narrated traditions; (such as, the rebellion of the Dajjal and the descent of Jesus, after the appearance of the Mahdi who will slay the Dajjal or who will descend at the same time that the Mahdi reappears and will assist him in the slaying of the Dajjal and also pray behind the Mahdi) are true and unanimously believed in by all Muslims."[2]

1- *Anbiya*: 105.
2- *The Introduction* of ibn Khaldun: 311.

Sheikh Abdul Muhsin Abbad, a professor of the Islamic College of Medina, says the following in one of his insightful discussions: "After the painful events that accrued to the Holy Sanctuary, various questions were posed and discussion held [regarding the events that will take place at the end of time]. In many of their books and articles the scholars have clarified the authenticity of many traditions that have been related from the Holy Prophet (s) [regarding this matter]. Amongst these scholars, Abul Aziz ibn Abdullah bin Baz, the Director of the Organization for Learning and Guidance, in some of his writings, has affirmed this matter with correct (*sahih*) traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) and so has Shaykh Abdul Aziz bin Saleh, the prayer leader (*Imam*) and orator (*Khatib*) at the Holy Mosque of the Prophet."[1] After this, he states that he [i.e. bin Baz] had written that pamphlet in order to clarify the fact that belief in the revolution of the Mahdi, towards the end of time, is something that can be affirmed by correct traditions, and is verified by Sunni scholars of the past and present, with the exception of a handful of people, [whose opinion holds no weight].

Ibn Hajjar al Haytami says in his book, *As Sawaeq al Muhriqah*: 'Maqatil and those who have followed him have said that this [following] verse was revealed regarding the Mahdi.' ***"Indeed he is a portent of the Hour; so do not doubt it and follow Me. This is the straight path."***[2]

1- Magazine of the Islamic College: 45.
2- *Zukhruf*: 61.

Soon we will mention various traditions that unmistakably state that the Mahdi will be from the Family of the Prophet (s) and consequently, indicate the blessings that reside in the progeny of Fatima (a.s.) and Ali (a.s); that God will bring forth from them much good and make their offspring the bearers of the keys of wisdom and the treasure troves of His mercy. The reason for this is that the Prophet (s) prayed to God to protect his daughter from the insinuations of Satan and made a similar plea with regards to Ali.[1]

Sheikh Nasir ud Deen al Bani, (a contemporary narrator of Prophetic traditions), says in the magazine *Islamic Civilization:* "One should know that there are many correct traditions about the revolution of the Mahdi. A large portion of them have reliable chains of transmission, of which I will mention a few." Following this, he states a handful of those traditions.

Traditions Pertaining to Awaiting the Mahdi According to the Shia

There are consecutively narrated traditions regarding the Mahdi that have been transmitted by the Shia narrators some of which have correct chains of transmission. Some of the scholars have assembled these traditions in various books. For example, Sheikh Lutfullah Safi Gulpaygani has done so in his book: *Muntakhab al Athar*, and also Sheikh Ali Kurani has done the same in his *Encyclopedia of the Mahdi.*

We do not intend to present these traditions since the purpose of this book is not to examine the traditions that

1- *Ibn Hajjar al Haytami, as Sawaeq al Muhriqah*, vol. 1; 240.

have come down to us regarding the Mahdi. They can be separately scrutinized in books of traditions. In this book we are pursuing another objective and pray to God that He grant us the opportunity to accomplish it. It is the following:

What is the Essence of Awaiting the Mahdi and what Value does it Hold for us in the Present?

Awaiting the Savior of Humanity is an invaluable Islamic concept for all times. It demarcates a specifically positive way of life. It often happens that people understand the concept of awaiting the Mahdi in a negative manner, which prevents them from moving forward [towards establishing God's rule in the land]. However, when understood in a positive way, it transforms man into moving forward in life. Therefore, it is imperative to properly conceptualize the significance of awaiting the Mahdi and is the prime purpose for which this book has been written.

Awaiting the savior is one of the pillars of our Islamic culture and ideology, way of life and the manner in which we look towards the future. It plays a dynamic role in sketching out the political lines of our present and future. Awaiting the redeemer is something that is deeply rooted in the lives of the Shia since almost 1200 years, given that the Minor Occultation of the Mahdi took place in the year 329 A.H.

Since then, it has, in a positive way, taken root in our political ideology and the revolutionary movements that have followed. If we were to (theoretically) remove the idea of awaiting the Mahdi from our political and revolutionary history we would find this long history to be drastically different. Anyone who has been blessed

with being able to read *Dua-e-Nudbah* (that is recited by the believers on Fridays) can witness the depths of this matter and the extent to which it has penetrated the souls of the Shia, their ideology and the way in which they think and act.

The Various Ways of Awaiting the Savior

The First Type of Waiting

The first type of waiting for a savior is when someone does not have the ability to hasten his appearance or postpone it in any way. An example of this is when someone is drowning and is waiting for someone to come and rescue him. He sees this person approaching him from afar. It is very clear that the person who is drowning does not have the capability to hasten his rescue. This style of waiting creates hope in the soul of the drowning person and shatters the darkness of despair that enshrouds him from all sides.

It is this hope that helps man to remain steadfast and patient until the rescuers come and save him. If man loses hope at this time no one can strengthen him or bring him back from the thing which he has filled him with despair. It may be that the thing that he is running away from is a difficult political situation, not an individual or a group. All of us have witnessed the desolation that overtook the Soviet Republic that was one of the two most powerful political entities of the world (if not the biggest one of them all).

On the other hand if man remains unwavering and God grants him the strength to struggle in the face of adversity then there is nothing that can weaken his resolve. It is astonishing how this human being that is made of flesh,

blood and bones transforms himself into a fortress and is able to bear the difficulties that would melt a piece of iron. Undoubtedly, this type of hope and resolve can only come from God, and are equally influential in helping man remain steadfast in the face of hardship. Awaiting the savior is one of the factors that gives birth to optimism and shatters the darkness of anguish that engulfs man. Hope and optimism help man remain steadfast in the face of hardship.

The Second Type of Waiting

This is the type of waiting in which man has the ability to hasten and bring about what he is waiting for. Examples of this are when someone is ill and waiting to recover; waiting for some success in the scientific or business fields; hoping to gain the upper hand over his enemy; be saved from the poverty and destitution that afflict him. All await salvation, but the hastening and postponement of these things are in the hands of man himself. It is possible to hasten one's recovery, delay it, and even negate it altogether. It is also possible to speed up ones success in the business and scientific field, delay it, or cancel it altogether. This type of waiting differs from the first one.

It is for this reason that the second type of waiting (aside from giving man hope and resolve) grants man the power to move forward in the direction of the thing that he is awaiting. If man knows that his succor depends upon his movement forward in the direction of his goals, he will struggle, move and strive for the very thing that will save him.

1. Hope tears down the curtain separating the present from the future and allows man to see his future. There is

a great difference between the person who sees God, the Universe and Man from the vantage point of the present, and the one who witnesses these entities in the past, present and the future. There is no doubt that this vision differs from the first and the negativity that enshrouds the first does not exist in the second.

2. Steadfastness gives man the ability to remain firm in the face of hardships and prevents him from falling until the rescue, that he hopes for, comes. Of course if man does not have any hope that someone will save him he will not try to struggle against the adversities that overwhelm him.

3. Movement gives man the skill to bring into existence the succor that he desires, and grants him power, autonomy and independence. This type of waiting is the revolutionary type of waiting and is the one that we hope to examine in this book.

The Instrument that is Change

The person who awaits in the second way resembles the person who hopes that God may improve his circumstances, change his poverty into wealth, his weakness into strength and his helplessness into assistance. There is no doubt that this is a most reasonable hope, since man is a conglomeration of weakness, inability, poverty, ignorance and evil. There is also no doubting that it is only God who can change all of these things for the better. He is the one who can transform [negative feelings] into strength, independence, knowledge and goodness. It is not irrational for man to place hope in God and await His succor, but also necessary that he move ahead in the direction of materialising what he hopes for. This can be brought

about through the logical means that God has himself ordained. Until man does not employ the means provided it is not proper for him to hope that God will bring about the changes. ***This means that God will implement change in man's life only when he first changes himself and his situation.***

All economic, political, military and scientific maladies that afflict us stem from problems that what brought upon ourselves and the weakness, laziness, despair, cowardliness and ignorance that we display. So, if we change ourselves God will change our situation, without a doubt. There can be no doubt that it is only God who can change our condition. There is no doubt that if we do not change ourselves then God will not change our condition (except if He chooses to do so). These two realities can not be doubted.

Waiting for the Mahdi is a Revolutionary Movement not a Silent Vigil

It is incorrect to assume that waiting for the reappearance of the Mahdi is a type of vigil in which one quietly awaits the expected event without playing any role in its occurrence either negatively or positively. If this were so then it would resemble one waiting for the eclipse of the moon or sun [something ridiculous indeed]. Therefore the correct understanding of waiting is that it is a movement, [coupled with] action, struggle and something to be achieved. Soon we will delve more into this matter.

What is the Cause of Delay in the Reappearance of the Mahdi?

The correct answer to this query depends upon an accurate understanding of awaiting the Mahdi and differs, depending upon whether we interpret it as a quiet vigil or a revolutionary movement.

The First Cause

According to this viewpoint, the reason of delay in the reappearance of the Mahdi and his global revolution is that it depends upon the fact that the world be first filled with injustice and oppression [which it is not at the moment]. If this interpretation is true, then waiting for the Savior becomes a quiet vigil in which we are not permitted to stop the spread of oppression and tyranny in the world. According to this interpretation, we are not allowed to fight against despotism since this would delay the reappearance of the Mahdi. Therefore we must quietly observe the spread of economic, political and military oppression until the world is completely overflowing with it. It is then that the Mahdi will resurface, and proclaim his insurgency against the tyrants and rescue the oppressed.

The Second Cause

On the other hand, if the cause of delay in the reappearance of the Mahdi is the non-existence of an adequate amount of allies who will prepare the world for his reappearance and his global revolution, then the matter will differ completely. In this case, it will be necessary that one work [towards this goal], help [one another in preparing for his reappearance], and prepare humanity for his uprising. It will be obligatory to enjoin

the good and forbid the evil as well, so that the ground may be prepared for the establishment of the True and Righteous Kingdom on this earth, [that will begin with the coming of the Imam]. According to this analysis, waiting for the Mahdi will not be a silent vigil but a revolutionary movement. It will be a struggle to establish the truth upon the face of this earth. The matter [i.e. the revolution of the Mahdi] will call for assistance in order that the earth may be prepared for the reappearance of the Imam and his worldwide revolution.

A Criticism of the First Cause

We have a series of objections that we wish to level against the first cause:

1. If it is said that the world will be filled with oppression and injustice, it does not mean that the Unity of God will no longer be believed in and justice will disappear altogether from the face of this earth. It does not imply that there will be no place on earth where God is worshipped. This is something that is impossible and against the norms by which God acts. Rather what this implies is that the repressive rulers will rebel against the truthful ones in the eternal battle between truth and falsehood.

It is not possible for the tyrants to gain the upper hand against truth any more than they have today. Today tyranny and oppression have reached their height. What has befallen the Muslims of the ealkans in this decade is something that is unparalleled in history. We witnessed the Serbian soldiers cut open the bellies of pregnant Muslim women and take out the unborn infants. We watched as they killed the children and decapitated them, and then cruelly played soccer with their heads! All this done in front of their mothers and fathers!

Also in Chechnya, they decapitated the Muslim children and fed their flesh to pigs. The cruelty of the communists meted out towards the Muslims of Central Asia by the order of the Socialist Rulers is something that could raise the hair of anyone who heard it stand on end. The torture of Muslims in the prisons of Israel is something that cannot be expressed in words. And the tyranny imposed in Iraq by the Ba'th regime through the mercenaries of Saddam is something far worse than all of this. It is inexpressible.

The oppression faced by Muslims throughout the world is something far greater than what has been expressed in the phrase "the earth will be filled up to the brim with oppression". It indicates the hardened hearts of the governments of the present century and the absence of a conscience in the materialistic human beings of today. The absence of a conscience has always been dangerous, causing nations to fall instantaneously from their glory; something that the Qur'an calls "the destruction of nations."

Conscience is something fundamental and vital for human beings. Just as it is not possible for man to live without security, medicine, food, government and science, it is also impossible for him to survive without a conscience. An immediate fall from glory is the outcome of a nation that relinquishes its conscience. After its fall, the nation will be substituted by another who will inherit its wealth and power as is the norm in such situations. This is what will in fact happen when the Imam's global revolution takes place and he seeks to establish his universal government throughout the world.

2. The occultation of the Imam was something caused by the widespread evil and transgression that had spread

throughout the world. If it were not for this he would never have gone into occultation. How then, can oppression be the cause of his reappearance and revolution?

3. Contrary to what some people believe, this world is moving towards a point in time where the oppressive political, military and economic institutions are on the verge of collapse. We ourselves saw how the Soviet Union was dismantled. Its example was that of a worn out old building that no one was able to prevent from falling.

The ignorant system of government today has begun to disintegrate, signifying its fall and destruction. How can we ignore these warnings?

4. Besides this, what we find in the religious texts is the following: ***"He will fill the earth with equity as it is filled with injustice and tyranny"*** not "after it was filled with injustice and tyranny."

This does not mean that the Imam is waiting for the earth to be filled with oppression and injustice any more than it is today, and only then reappear. Rather, the meaning of this religious text is that when he reappears he will fill the earth with justice and this will be equal in weight to the oppression that will reign at that time. In this way society will be cleansed from the tyranny that plagued it before his reappearance.

A'amash has related from Abi Wael that Imam Ali (a.s) said about the Mahdi: ***"He will re-emerge at a time when people will have forgotten him and will seek to establish justice in the land. His reappearance will delight the inhabitants of heaven and those who dwell therein. He will fill the earth with fairness in the same way that it***

will be filled with injustice and tyranny."[1] And in another narration we find the following: "***He will fill the world with justice as it is filled with oppression and tyranny."***[2]

According to one opinion the meaning of the statement: ***"The earth will be filled with oppression and tyranny"*** is the following: Oppression will become so prevalent that people will become dejected. Because of this, the curtain that was veiling its true identity will be lost and human beings will be able to witness its true nature. The prevailing systems of governance will not be able to provide human beings with the [basic goods] that they expect from them, and so, people will begin discussing the Divine System of Government that was lost to them all those years. They will also begin to speak about the Divine leader who will take them by the hands and lead them to God. We have seen the deterioration of these systems of governments one after another; the prime example of this being the fall of the Soviet Union and the failures of the U.S. in the past. All of these disappointments have turned the attention of human beings towards the divine system of government and the divine leader [i.e. the Mahdi], who will save them from the perils that beset them from every direction. This was, in brief, a criticism of the first view. Now we will turn our attention to the second cause

1- *Bihar al Anwar*: vol. 51, 120.
2- *Muntakhab al Athar*, 162.

The Second Cause of Delay in the Imam's Reappearance

While analyzing the causes of delay in the Imam's reappearance, the second cause is the one whose existence and non-existence will delay or hasten the reappearance of the Imam. Foremost is the non-existence of an adequate number of allies for the Mahdi, and the fact that the Shia of the Imam do not have the qualities necessary [in those people who will assist him in his revolution]. The revolution that the Imam will lead will be a global one, in which the oppressed and downtrodden people will be at the vanguard [guiding humanity towards the Utopia promised by God]. ***"And We desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs."***[1] It will be at this point that the oppressed will inherit that wealth and power that was once in the hands of the tyrants. ***"And to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts from them, that of which they were apprehensive."***[2] Here the Imam will cleanse the earth of the filth of polytheism and oppression that it was filled with. ***"He will fill the earth with justice as it was once filled with oppression and tyranny."*** As it has been stated in some traditions there will be no place on the face of the earth from which the call of ***"There is no god but God will not be heard."***

The axis around which this universal revolution will revolve will be [belief in] God's Unity and His Justice. There is no doubt that such a revolution demands a

1- *Qasas*: 5.
2- *Qasas*: 6.

worthy groundwork, both quantitative and qualitative. Without this preparation, such a global revolution will be impossible, as is testified by history and proven by the Divine norms.

The Role that Divine Norms and Unseen Help will play in the Revolution of the Imam

The revolution of the Mahdi against the oppressors, tyrants and ignorant system of governments will not materialise without Unseen help from God. This can be proven by the Islamic texts that affirm this Divine succor and describe its nature. Divine assistance is only one side of the equation, while the other are the divine norms that control historical developments and the transformations of society, (that will bring the global revolution of the Imam into existence and eventually culminate it). These divine norms do not change, as testified to by the following verse: ***"This is Allah's precedent with those who passed away before, and you will never find any change in Allah's precedent."***[1] Naturally there is no conflict between Divine laws and the assistance of God. The nature of this revolution is the same as that the invitation of the Holy Prophet (s) towards God's Unity, and his attempt to implement the practical implications of this Unity in society. This very movement is what will be affirmed by the Unseen divine assistance. For it was God who helped His Prophet (s) by means of the angels, fierce winds and armies that could not be seen. He helped him overcome his enemies by means of supernatural "thunder". But at the same time, God commanded His Prophet (s) to prepare the way for this revolution:

1- *Ahzab*: 62.

"Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, filling, thereby, with awe the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but Allah knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged."[1]

The various stages of this revolution were completed by means of the norms and laws of God which control the direction in which history and societies move. Sometimes this law assisted the Prophet (s) against his enemy and at other times it caused his followers to have set backs. The Prophet (s) used wealth, armies and weapons in his revolution and destroyed his enemies by means of weapons. But by no means did these things contradict the fact that the Prophet (s) was being assisted by unseen Divine help. This is something that cannot be doubted. They are two sides of one equation.

The global revolution that will be led by the grandson of the same Prophet (s) will be of the same nature and need effort, leadership and divine assistance. One of the norms that must inevitably come to play in this universal revolution is the fact that it is necessary to pave the way and prepare for this event before the reappearance of the Imam, and that he must be assisted and helped when he does reappear. Without this groundwork and assistance it will not be possible for such a vast revolution to come into existence within the timeline of human history.

We will, in what follows, present two groups of religious texts, (the first of which is related to the preparation that

1- *Anfal*: 1.

will lay the groundwork for that reappearance, while the other relates the help that must be given to the Imam when he reappears, and the nature of his allies). We will then, God willing, ponder on the meaning of these traditions.

The first set of traditions, describe the people who will prepare the way for the Imam. These individuals will be those who will prepare the earth and humanity for the reappearance of the Imam and his global revolution. This group will naturally precede the re-emergence of the Imam. The second set of traditions, describe the allies of the Mahdi who will fight alongside that Holy Personage, and who the Imam will lead in rebellion against the oppressors. We are, therefore, between two groups of people:

1. The group that will prepare the way for the Imam's reappearance.

2. The group of people that will fight alongside him in his revolution against the tyrants.

Below, we will examine these two types of traditions.

The Group of People who will prepare the way for the Coming of the Imam

There are a multitude of Islamic traditions both from the Sunnis and the Shia regarding the group of people that will lay the groundwork for the government of the Mahdi. These traditions enumerate many famous Islamic lands [from which this faction comes]. The most important of these lands from which this group of people stem are the East and Khorasan (apparently the East is a term that is used to imply Khorasan itself), Qom, Ray, and Yemen. In what follows we will present the

traditions that are specifically related to the group of people that prepare the way for the Imam.

1- The People who will lay the Groundwork for the Imam from "the East"

Hakim has narrated the following in his book from Abdullah ibn Masud: ***"We came to the Holy Prophet (s) who came out to meet us while he was smiling. We could see the effects of happiness on his face. We did not ask him anything but he answered us [about them]. If we remained silent he would begin speaking himself. This continued until youths from the family of Hashim passed by us, amongst whom were Hasan and Husain. When the Holy Prophet's eyes fell upon them he stared at them and his eyes began to water. We said to him: Oh Prophet of God! We are seeing that something has upset you." So he said: "God has chosen the afterlife over the world for the Family of the Prophet. After my demise my Family will become dispersed in the lands until black flags will be raised in the East. This faction [i.e. the one who will raise this black flag] will demand that the Truth be established in the lands but they will be denied this request. Once again they will ask but will be denied. Again they will ask but they will be denied. After this, they will wage a battle and they will be assisted by God. If you or your progeny should happen to meet them, he should come to the Imam from my family, even if this necessitates ascending an icy peak. They will hold the flags of guidance and will hand them over to a man [i.e. the Mahdi] from my family."***[1]

1- *Mustadrak as Sahihayn*: 4, 464.

It has also been narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s) that he said: ***"It is as if I see a group of people who are moving from the East. They demand the truth but they are not given it. At this, they will demand it again, [but they will be denied it]. When they see this they will place their swords upon their shoulders [to fight for what they require], and then they will be given what they want. They will not get what they desire until they stand up for their rights and they will not hand it over except to its owner [i.e. the Imam]. Those who will be killed from amongst them will be counted as martyrs."***[1]

2- The People who will lay the Groundwork for the Imam from Khorasan

It has been narrated from Muhammad ibn Hanifah (although the tradition is fabricated it is apparently from Imam Ali (a.s)): ***"After this a flag (i.e. an army) will rise up from Khorasan and will fight against the allies of the Sufyani until they reach Bayt al Muqaddas. They will prepare the way for the government of the Mahdi."***[2]

3- The People who will lay the Groundwork for the Imam from Qom

Majlisi has narrated the following in his Bihar al Anwar***:*** ***"A man from Qom will invite people to the truth. They will gather around him. Their hearts will be as strong as firebrands of iron. Stormy winds will not be able to shake them nor will they shrink away from war. They will not fear anything and they will trust in God. And***

1- *Bihar al Anwar*: 52, 243.
2- *Asr az Zuhur*: 206.

the end will be in the favor of those who are pious."[1]

4- The People who will Prepare for the Imam from Yemen

The following has been narrated from Imam Baqir (a.s) regarding the army from Yemen that will appear before the reappearance of the Imam: ***"There is no flag more rightly guided than the Yemeni Flag. That is truly the flag of guidance because it will invite people to its rightful owner."***[2]

Meanings of these Traditions

1- The Strong Assemblage

The first thing that we notice when we glance at these traditions is the fact that this group of people is strong and powerful. They are fierce [against the enemies of God] and will thus be able to prepare the earth for the advent of the Imam. They will single handedly face the tyrants. According to a tradition narrated from Kulayni, Imam Sadiq (a.s) interpreted the verse of the Holy Qur'an: "***So when the first occasion of the two [prophecies] came, We aroused against you Our servants possessing great might, and they ransacked [your] habitations, and the promise was bound to be fulfilled,"***[3] as referring to this group of people, and described them thus: "***Their hearts are like firebrands of iron. Not even the thunderous winds can shake them."***

It is in the nature of hearts to be yielding and clement,

1- *Bihar al Anwar*: 60, 216.
2- *Bihar al Anwar*: 52, 232.
3- *Israa*: 5.

but these hearts have been transformed into smoldering firebrands of iron because of the confrontation with tyrants and oppressors. Strength and resolve are the characteristics of the people that have taken upon themselves the responsibility of hange and revolution. It is the quality of those individuals whom God has placed at critical junctures of history in order to take humanity from one point to the next. It is this group of people who possess these distinctions.

2- The Group of People that Challenge

Another important characteristic of this group of people is the fact that they will defy the governments of this world and will be obstinate towards them with all of the strength and power that they have. They all understand that this is a system that is sovereign over the entire world and not just a specific area. This system is made up of various political, economic and military bodies with all the red, green and blue lines of bureaucracy that exist between the various sub-entities. This complicated conglomeration has great authority over the entire world in the same way that a small mechanism has the ability to carry heavy loads for man with slight movements. It was because of this that the Soviet Union was an object of admiration even after its fall. However, the groups of believers who prepare the way for the advent of the Imam are the ones who will easily erase these lines of demarcation. They will [have the power] to change the mathematical equations that balance the world which everyone takes for granted and respects. They will take away from these governmental organizations the glory that they possess, while these governments will not be able to do anything to stop them, because the only thing that they can take recourse to is to kill them, imprison

them, torture them or expel them from their countries, [and this is something that they are indifferent to].

The distinction that we find in the tradition is very precise: ***"The fierce and thunderous winds will not shake them nor will they run from battle or fear [the enemy in any way]. They trust in God and [thus] the final outcome will be in the favor of the pious."*** The person who does not fear [anything] will not run away from battle, and it is only natural that thunderous winds will not shake him at all. The strength of this group lies in the very fact that they do not fear anything and it is this which annoys the powerful systems of government.

During the presidential elections in the U.S a presidential debate was held between Jimmy Carter and his opposition (as is generally done every election year between Presidential candidates). In this debate Carter's opposition raised the following objection: "It was in your reign as president that America lost much of its grandeur as a result of the sinking of an American sea vessel in Beirut. You should be held responsible for this." The President of the United States said the following to him in response: "What do you want us to do when facing a person who is seeking out his own death? The most we can do is to tell people to run away, in fear, from him. If the person who accomplished this task was someone who threw himself in the jaws of death what could I possibly do to prevent such an occurrence? What would you do if you were put in such a situation?"

This is but an example of the courage and fortitude that this group of people displays when facing the super powers in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, Algeria, Egypt, and Sudan and recently in Bosnia Herzegovina. These people are sometimes taken into

custody by the super powers and they fall into their clutches. Even though these powers torture them they do not cry out for help. One of them may happen to say to his torturer (while he is torturing him): "Soon there will remain in your soul a great regret that I did not cry out or was not hurt in anyway by your torture."

3- The International Reaction to this Group of People

The reaction that the world will show to these people is anger and rage since this group of believers will come and seek to shake the foundations of the existing systems and establish a real scheme of things. The following has been narrated by Aban ibn Taghlab from Imam Sadiq (a.s): ***"When the flag of truth is raised the inhabitants of the East and West will curse it. Do you know why this is so?" I said, "No" He said, "It is because of whom they will encounter from the Family of the Prophet before the reappearance of the Imam."***[1]

Now, the term "Family of the Prophet" before the reappearance of the Imam refers to those people who will prepare the way for the Imam's advent. It is this faction that will cause difficulties for the existing systems of governments and who will take away their peace of mind.

Kulayni has related the following in his book *Kafi* as a commentary on the verse: ***"So when the first occasion of the two [prophecies] came, We aroused against you Our servants possessing great might, and they ransacked [your] habitations, and the promise was bound to be fulfilled."***[2] ***Imam Sadiq (a.s) said: "They are a nation***

1- *Bihar al Anwar*: 52, 63.
2- *Israa*: 5.

whom God will raise up before the advent of the Mahdi. There will be no enemy of the Family of the Prophet except that they will slay him."

The reaction that the world will show to this group of believers resembles the reaction that the world has shown the Islamic Resistance, and so ignorantly named it "Islamic Fundamentalism", and the group, "terrorists".

The Means by Which the Believers will prepare the earth for the Advent of the Imam

The preparation of the earth for the re-emergence of the Imam is something vital, vast, grand and quite complex. In seeking to lay the groundwork for the advent of the Imam, these believers will face the tyrants, oppressors and leaders of disbelief, who form a political front line [opposing Islam]. Even though these tyrants have differences of opinion with one another they still form a unified group that possesses wealth, political power, military strength and organization. They use all of these tools to fight against the Islamic resistance. It is imperative for the believers who will pave the way for the advent of the Imam to utilize those very means when confronting the international tyrants. Of course the believers have the upper hand on these oppressors since they have been nurtured by their faith and have the [spiritual] courage to struggle against oppression. Therefore the plan for preparation [for the Imam] that the believers will seek to implement will have two dimensions:

The First Dimension

The first factor or dimension is the fact that these people have been brought up in the environment of faith and

have an inclination to struggle for what is right. This is something that the opposition lacks.

The Second Dimension

The second factor that will aid these believers in their quest is the political, military, economic and scientific apparatus that is absolutely necessary for such a revolution.

No one doubts the fact that the faction of believers that prepare the earth for the coming of the Imam needs the help of these tools, although it is not possible that they equal the power that their adversaries may possess. Of course these political, military, economic and scientific tools are not feasible without the existence of a political system and a government on earth. The government that will be ruled by the believers who are to pave the way for the coming of the Imam has been predicted in many [religious] traditions. For the Imam to reappear, it is necessary that this power exists on this earth. If this does not exist then the natural means that are necessary for the Imam to come will also not exist. Securing this grand power demands action and movement, and simply waiting for them to come about on their own is not sufficient.

The Allies of the Imam as mentioned in the Islamic Traditions

The group of the believers that will prepare the earth for the advent of the Imam precedes the group that will aid the Imam once he will re-emerge. The people who make up the latter faction will in fact be the disciples of that group that will precede them. They will differ from them because of a number of distinctive characteristics. Some

traditions point towards one of the groups [that will make up the large number of allies that will come to the aide of the Imam, once he returns]. These are the youth that come from the "Taliqan". These are traditions that have been related both from Sunni and Shia sources.

The Youths from the "Taliqan"

Here are those traditions that narrators have related (both Sunni and Shia) regarding the "Youths of the Taliqan."

Al Muttaqi al Hindi has related the following in his book *Kanz al `Ummal* (and Suyuti has done the same in his book *al Hawi*) regarding the Allies of the Imam from the Taliqan: ***"Woe to the Taliqan! God has placed treasures in that city that are not filled with gold or silver but with men who truly know God. These are the allies of the Mahdi."***[1]

In the book *Yanabee al Mawaddah,* composed of Qanduzi, the following statement has been related: ***"Blessed be the Taliqan!"***[2]

Majlisi has related the following in his *Bihar al Anwar*: ***"There is a treasure in the Taliqan that is not made up of gold or silver. In it is a flag that has not been raised from the day it was sewn. That city possesses men whose hearts are stronger than firebrands of iron. They do not doubt God at all and they are stronger than mountains. If they were to be placed on mountains [the weight of their personas] would cause them to shatter. They will not seek out a land with their flag except that***

1- *Kanz al Umaal*: 7, 26.
2- *Yanaabi al Mawaddah*: 449.

they will conquer it. It is as if their horses were eagles [because of the speed at which they take flight]. They will cling unto the saddle of the Imam and thereby seek the blessings of God. They will gather around it and strengthen themselves for battle [against his enemies]. They will spend the nights on their feet [in battle with the enemies], and they will witness the daybreak while they are still mounted on their saddles.

In the night they are like monks while in the day they resemble lions. They will be more obedient to the Imam than is a slave-girl to her master. [They are like candles of wisdom and] it is as if there are lanterns [of wisdom] in their hearts. They are apprehensive [of the future] due to the fear they have of God. They will invite others to martyrdom [in the path of the Imam] and will wish to be killed in the Way of God. There battle cry will be the following: Revenge for Imam Husain! When they ride forward, lightning will flash ahead of them the distance of one month's travel. They will walk to their Master [i.e. the Imam] and it is by their means that God will assist the True Imam."[1]

The Companions of the Imam are Young

In the traditions [that have been related regarding the advent of the Imam and the events that will follow] it is indicated that the Companions of the Imam will be young and that, with the exception of a few, no indolent old people will be amongst them. Majlisi has related the following in the *Bihar*: ***"The Companions of the Mahdi are all young. There are no old people amongst them with the exception of a few."***[2]

1- *Bihar al Anwar*: 52, 307.

2- *Bihar al Anwar*: 52, 334.

The Number of Chiefs among the Imam's Companions

Majlisi has related the following in his *Bihar al Anwar*: ***"God will gather the Companions of the Mahdi around him and they will be 313 men. God will gather them around him as was not expected and they will pay allegiance to him between the Rukn and the Maqam of Ibrahim. There will be a covenant with him [i.e. the Imam] from the Prophet of God (s) that will have been passed down from father to father [until it will have finally reached him]."***[1]

In most of the traditions it has been mentioned that the number of men who will pay allegiance to the Imam between the Rukn and the Maqam of Ibrahim is equal to the number of chiefs of the army of the Mahdi.

Some Reflections on the Meanings of these Traditions

Before we begin examining the implications of these traditions, we must first state that the language that they use is purely symbolic. "Sword" means weapon, and "horses", means of transportation (to be used in war). Also, the phrase "monks in the night and lions in the day" is a symbolic expression meant to convey the idea that they perform acts of worship at night and display their valor on the battlefield. This [i.e. symbolic language] is a popular literary device well known by those acquainted with the expressions found in Islamic texts and traditions. Now we will begin scrutinizing the meanings and implications that these various traditions have.

1- *Bihar al Anwar*: 53, 239 and 238.

1- Treasures that are not Gold or Silver

The Companions of the Imam are "treasures". A treasure is a large amount of wealth whose place is unknown to man. Sometimes, this treasure may be hidden in man's own home or even beneath his feet [while he does not know of it]. It may rest under the earth adjacent to his dwelling or in his city, while he is oblivious of it. The Companions of the Imam are also like treasures. It may be that one of them resides in our own home or in a neighboring one. It is also possible that he may be living in our city but we do not know. We may even ridicule this person or make light of him. He may be abject in the eyes of men who are unable to penetrate the depths of his soul in order to see the treasure of [conviction] that lies within. The insight, certainty, obedience to God, courage, valor and desire for sheer annihilation in the Essence of God are distinctions of the Companions of the Imam, which will not be created instantaneously once he reappears, (but form over time, much in the way that an ore is formed). They exist in the souls of these youth but are hidden from the eyes of human beings like hidden treasures.

2- Power and Insight

God says, regarding His righteous servants: ***"And remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, possessing hands and eyes. Indeed We purified them with the exclusiveness of the remembrance of the abode [of the Hereafter]."***[1] This is an exquisite description of men of faith.

1- *The letter Sad*: 45-47.

It is absolutely necessary that insight be accompanied by strength because without strength it will be wasted. Now, insight is not possessed except by a ardent believer. When he weakens so will his insight. In the same way strength must be paired with insight. This is because without insight, strength will be transformed into stubbornness and obstinacy. [In the abovementioned verse] God has described Ibrahim, Ishaq and Yaqub as possessing both "hands and eyes". This implies that they had both insight and power. The traditions that we have recently presented also described the Companions of the Mahdi to be possessing "hands and eyes".

3- Insight and Comprehension

The expression that the traditions use to convey the insight and wisdom of the Companions of the Imams is amazing. It says: ***"Like candles. It is as if there are lanterns [shining] in their hearts."*** Is it possible for darkness to pierce lanterns? Never! Yes, it is possible that darkness surrounds a lantern but it does not have the ability to penetrate its glass. In the same way it is impossible that [the darkness] of doubt and misgiving enter the hearts of the Companions of the Imam however great those doubts may be. Doubts never enter their minds, they never waiver and they do not turn back once they have set out on their quest [to come to the aid of the Imam]. The expression that the tradition uses is: ***"They do not doubt at all the Essence of God,"*** is something other than doubt. Rather it describes moments of doubt that enter minds where certainty prevails. This is something that occurs for most of the believers, from time to time. However the Companions of the Imam are such that their certainty is never mingled with doubt. Theirs is an unadulterated conviction that is not tinged with disbelief in any way.

4- A Piercing Resolve

This insight gives birth to a piercing resolve that does not flee or turn away [from its goal]. The expression that has been used to convey this idea is quite an adequate one, since the 'firebrand' pierces whatever stands in its way as long as it is ablaze. Actually, in the tradition, the expression, ***"sharper than a firebrand"*** has been used, which makes the expression even more eloquent and one which, more appropriately, expresses the strength of their determination. We cannot truly comprehend what treasures of wisdom, certainty, resolution and power God has placed in the souls of these youths from the Taliqan. This is because the expressions that have been used in the traditions to convey these ideas are not popular ones. It is as if the Imam's soul was overcome with rapture and ecstasy when speaking about [this chivalrous band of youth]: ***"Firebrands of iron. They resemble candles and it is as if there are lanterns [burning bright] in their hearts. [Their resolve] is more penetrating than a smoldering firebrand. [It is as if] they are monks in the night and [as fierce as] lions in the day."*** It is almost as if the tradition is using every literary device at its disposal in order to convey the loftiness of the wisdom, insight, strength and firmness of their will.

5- Power

The traditions also describe the youth from the Taliqan as possessing an unprecedented and terrifying power; a power that is usually not possessed by people as young as them. Ponder over this expression: ***"It is as if their hearts were firebrands of smoldering iron!"*** Have you ever seen anyone capable of bending, breaking or twisting a firebrand of iron with his bare hands? ***"If they were to attack a mountain they would shatter it. They do***

not seek out a land with their flag [shaking in the wind] except that they destroy it, and it is as if their horses were eagles, [because of the swiftness with which they run].” These are indeed unique expressions that indicate the terrifying power that these believers possess. It is not one that the tyrants of this world possess, rather it is a power that stems from the strength of their resolve and the depths of their conviction [in God].

6- Seeking out Death and the Love of Martyrdom

“They will pray for martyrdom and they hope to be killed in the path of God.” [These believers seek out death] which is the very thing that people in their nineties still fear, and that human beings, who have lived out their lives to the fullest, still shrink away from, even though they may have enjoyed all of the pleasures possible in this world. Death, (that the aged fear), is sought out by these youth even while they are in the prime of their lives. Now, the love of martyrdom is caused by two factors and in turn it gives rise to two other things in the life of man.

It is only when man turns away from the world and turns his face towards God that the love of martyrdom blossoms in the soul of man. These are the two factors that give birth to the love of martyrdom in man’s heart. Hence, when man removes the love of this world from his heart and severs the ties that it may have with it, he removes one of the obstacles that lie in his Path towards God. Now, this is the major obstacle. The other thing that he must do is to attach his heart to God and to occupy himself with His remembrance. He must drown his heart in His love. He must totally turn the face of his existence towards God. Even though these people do not care in the

least about the world they still live amongst normal human beings, walk in their markets and sit in their gatherings, but their hearts are never present. It does not matter that they are there, since [their hearts] are not present. These are the people that love the death that other human beings fear. They pray for martyrdom and they [seek] meeting God in that. They take pleasure in being killed for God as other people enjoy the fleeting pleasures of this world. We can say that the delight that these believers obtain from martyrdom is even greater than the momentary enjoyments of this world.

There are very few people that can truly understand why these people are the way they are. People in the West can in no way comprehend their personas and thus, sometimes, label them as "suicidal." This is while a suicidal person is one who has become fed up with the world and has reached a dead-end in life. These youths, however, find all of the doors of the world open in front of them. The world smiles upon them and allows them to rest in its soothing shade. It lets them enjoy its beauty and wonders. They have not become despondent with the world nor have they reached a dead end. Rather they have turned away from the world because they seek the "meeting with God". The people of the West describe them as "terrorists", when they are not. On the other hand, if one were to say that they do not fear the terror [of the West], this would be a more accurate expression and one, more in tune with reality.

These are the two factors that cause the love of martyrdom and the desire to be killed in the Way of God to blossom [in the hearts of men]. Now the characteristics that come into being as a result of the love of martyrdom are resolve and determination. The person who seeks out

death and is able to free himself from the love for the world finds in himself a resolution and strength that ordinary people do not possess. This strength and resolve are not caused by possessing the same material resources that are in the hands of his adversaries. This, however, does not negate the necessity of these resources and their importance in the coming of the Imam and the swiftness of his reappearance.

7- Balanced Personalities

"They resemble lions in the day and monks in the night". One of the most outstanding distinctions of this group of believers is the fact that their personalities are very balanced. In fact, this is the secret of their strength and their unbreakable resolve. They have struck a balance between the life of this world and that of the Hereafter. They have also equally paired strength and wisdom. God loves this balance and dislikes people who go to either of the two extremes. God says in the Qur'an: ***"By the means of what Allah has given you, seek the abode of the Hereafter, while not forgetting your share of this world. Be good [to others] just as Allah has been good to you, and do not try to cause corruption in the land. Indeed Allah does not like the agents of corruption."***[1] God also says, when teaching His servants a prayer: ***"And among them there are those who say, 'Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire."***[2] He also says: ***"Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor open it altogether, or you will sit***

1- *Qasas*: 77.
2- *Baqarah*: 201.

blameworthy, regretful."[1]

An example of this equilibrium is the balance between fear of God, His worship, humility towards the believers and fierceness towards the infidels: ***"O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, [who will be] humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, waging jihad in the way of Allah, not fearing the blame of any blamer. That is Allah's grace which He grants to whomever He wishes, and Allah is All-bounteous, All-knowing."***[2] Another good example of this balance is the one that they strike between trust in God and struggle in His Way. According to the tradition of Shareef Razi, Imam Ali (a.s) has described some aspects of this sense of balance for his companion Hammam when he was asked to characterize the pious:

"The peculiarity of anyone of them is that you will see that he has strong faith in religion, determination along with leniency, faith with conviction, eagerness in (seeking) knowledge, in forbearance, moderation in riches, devotion in worship, gracefulness in starvation, endurance in hardship, desire for the lawful, pleasure in guidance and hatred for greed. He performs virtuous deeds but still feels afraid. In the evening he is anxious to offer thanks to God. In the morning his anxiety is to remember God. He passes the night in fear and rises in the morning in joy…His knowledge is mixed with forbearance and his speech is backed up by his actions…He is dignified during calamities…His own

1- *Israa*: 29.
2- *Maedah*: 54.

self is in distress because of him, while the people are at ease because of him."[1]

A balanced personality is one of the most distinguishing qualities of the Companions of the Imam.

8- Monks in the Night and Lions in the Day

It is to this poise and equilibrium that the following tradition refers: ***"[They are like] monks in the night and [resemble] lions in the day."*** The night and the day play different roles in the formation of man's personality, but these roles are complimentary in the sense that one of them perfects the other. They are both necessary in the development of the believer's persona; a believer who is both a worshipper and a warrior. Thus, if it were not for the night, man would not be able to confront the difficulties that the day presents him with, nor be able to walk on the difficult path of God at that time. And if it were not for the effort that he exhorts in the day, the night would lose those worshippers who stand up to worship God.

In the Holy Qur'an, much importance has been placed on the role that the night plays in helping man in his mission to call people towards God. In fact, one of the first [sections of the Qur'an that was revealed to the Holy Prophet (s) was the blessed Surah Muzzammil, in which God invites his Prophet to prepare himself to take vigil in the night so that, in this way, he may gain the strength required to bear the weighty task [i.e. preaching God's word] that he was to perform in the day: ***"O you wrapped up in your mantle! Stand vigil through the night, except***

1- *Nahl al Balagha*: 162.

a little, a half, or reduce a little from that or add to it, and recite the Qur'an in a measured tone. Indeed, soon We shall cast on you a weighty word. Indeed, the watch of the night is firmer in tread and more upright in respect to speech, , for indeed, during the day you have drawn-out engagements."[1]

The word used to describe the night is indeed very eloquent and expressive [of its true nature]. This is because it is the night that causes man's personality to "blossom" and "grow". It is the night that fashions him and forms him into a being that is able to withstand the difficult tasks that he must perform in the day. It constructs his being and prepares him for great feats of physical and psychological talent. Also in the Sermon [describing] the Pious, Imam Ali depicts the night and the day [of the believer] as the two major time periods in the life of the pious person. Here is the tradition as related by Sharif Razi:

"During the night they stand on their feet reading portions of the Qur'an and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief from themselves, and seeking, by it, the cure for their ailments. If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across a verse that contains the fear (of Hell) they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sounds of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They bend their backs, prostrate themselves on their foreheads, their

1- *Muzzammil*: 1-7.

palms, their knees and their toes, and beseech God, the Sublime, for their deliverance. During the day they are enduring, learned, virtuous and God-fearing. Fear of God has made them thin like arrows. If anyone looks at them he believes they are sick, although they are not sick, or, he says that they have gone mad. In fact, great concern (i.e. of Hell) has made them mad."

The night and the day are two time-periods in the life of man and they complement one another. The night has people [who are accustomed to it] and has its sphere of influence, while the day also has its own inhabitants and jurisdiction. The men of the day are subdued by the sovereignty of the night, while the men of the night are weakened in the day and thus not able to invite people towards God in that time period. The Companions of the Mahdi, however, are men both of the night and the day. God has given them the sovereignty of the night and the day. If they were not men possessing the sovereignty of the night then they would not be able to confront the tyrants by themselves. And if they were not men of the day they would not have the ability to cleanse the earth of the filth of polytheism and establish the Unity of God and His Justice on the face of this earth and in the lives of men. If they were not men of the night they would be overcome by arrogance and stray off the Straight Path.

Two Stages or Two Groups?

There are consequently two groups of believers in front of us. One of them has witnessed the fall of Marxist Socialism and the experiment that was free enterprise. These are the believers that are preparing the earth for the advent of the Imam. The second group is of those people who will come to the aide of the Imam once he reappears.

Are these simply two groups of believers, or are they also two separate stages in history? This is something that is not clear for the author of these lines, but I believe that it is very far-fetched that such a grand episode could be accomplished in one epoch.

The Obligations of the Preparation Stage and its Responsibilities

Right now we are living in the preparation stage [for the coming of the Mahdi]. We can safely say that this is the longest time period that Islam has witnessed. What are the most important obligations in this time period? In what follows we will present a sample of those obligations and responsibilities:

One: Wisdom

A. The Wisdom of God's Unity

This implies understanding that the entire universe is from God, that everything is controlled by His command, that He has power over all things and that everything in the Heavens and the Earth are part of God's vast militia. It necessitates understanding that nothing owns anything for itself.

B. The Comprehension in the Midst of Difficult Political Situations that God's Promise [to Assist the Believers is True]

This comprehension demands that man does not lose faith even in times of weakness and infirmity, and truly "feels" this saying of God: ***"Do not weaken or grieve:***

you shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful."[1]

And also God's saying: ***"And We desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs, and to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts from them, that of which they were apprehensive."***[2]

And also God's saying: ***"Certainly, We wrote in the Psalms after the Torah: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth."***[3] And the following saying of God: ***"Allah has ordained: 'I shall surely prevail, I and My apostles.' Indeed Allah is All-strong, All-mighty."***[4] And also the following saying of God: ***"Allah will surely help those who help Him."***[5]

C. Understanding the Role a Muslim must play on the Face of this earth

This role is that of leadership of humanity and being a witness over the actions of men. God says the following: "***Thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses over the people, and that the Apostle may be a witness over you. And We did not appoint the qiblah you were following, but that We may ascertain those who follow the Apostle from those who turn back on their heels. It was indeed a hard thing except for those whom Allah has guided. And Allah would not let***

1- *Aale Imran*: 139.
2- *Qasas*: 5-6.
3- *Anbiya* : 105.
4- *Mujadilah*: 21.
5- *Hajj*: 40.

your prayers go to waste. Indeed Allah is most kind and merciful to mankind."[1]

D. Understand the Part that Religion Plays in the Life of Man

Religion helps remove the obstacles and impediments that stand in the way of man calling people towards God. God says in the Holy Qur'an: ***"Fight them until faithlessness is no more, and religion becomes [exclusively] for Allah. Then if they relinquish, there shall be no reprisal except against the wrongdoers."***[2]

E. Understanding the Divine Norms that Control History and Society

Besides understanding these norms and laws it is also crucial to comprehend the compulsion to labor [in God's way] even while these laws are at work. It is also important to understand that these laws will never break nor will the necessity of action ever finish. Because of this, God has ordered the Muslims to prepare themselves for this decisive revolution: ***"Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, filling with awe, thereby, the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but Allah knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged."***[3]

1- *Baqarah*: 143.
2- *Baqarah*: 193.
3- *Anfal*: 60.

Two: Hope

If man has hope and trusts that the promise that God has made to His servants will not fail and that His power and sovereignty [has the ability to save him from peril] then this hope will never end in despair. The one possessing such hope will never be disgraced. It is by means of this hope that the Muslim ties the "chord" of his being to that of God's and supplements his own power with that of God's. Now, the hope of a person who trusts in God will never be shattered nor will his power ever wane.

Three: Struggle [on God's Path]

Struggle is the natural outcome of hope [that one will succeed]. The drowning man who sees the lifeguards approaching him to save him, struggles to surmount the drowning waves surrounding him. He finds in his muscles a supernatural strength that he uses to overcome them.

Four: Movement

This movement is composed of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil and inviting people to God. This is done in order to prepare the earth for the advent of the Imam, his revolution and his global government. The groups of believers who take it upon themselves to assist the Imam and prepare the earth for his advent are those who possess wisdom, faith, power and organization.

Five: Praying for the Re-Emergence of the Imam

There can be no doubt that if prayer is accompanied with action, struggle, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil then this can be a factor that can hasten the reappearance of the Imam.

A multitude of prayers have been passed down to us pertaining to the reappearance of the Imam and also the reward that a believer has near God when he awaits his advent. One of these is the following prayer that we find the believers reciting quite often:

"O God! Be an overseer [of the affairs] of your Vicegerent on this Earth, the Proof of God, the son of Hasan [al Askari]. [Be his] protector, guide, helper, escort and guardian! [Do so] at this hour and at every hour! [Do so] until the time when you peacefully establish his rule on your earth and allow him to enjoy its bounties for a long time."

Grief and Prayer

In the blessed *Dua Nudba,* related from the Twelfth Imam himself, we read the following bitter-sweet prayer:

"Oh Lord, we present our grief on the absence of our Prophet (s)[to You], the absence of our Leader (i.e. the Imam), the multitude of our enemies, the minuteness of our numbers, the severity of the problems that beset us, the oppression of the world upon us…

Oh Lord, we are eager to see the glorious government [of the Imam], that will bring back honor to Islam and the Muslims, and will debase hypocrisy and the hypocrites. Make us of those people who invite others to Your obedience, and who will be leaders of the caravan of people wayfaring towards You. In this way grant us the nobility of this world and the next."

The Appropriate Way of Awaiting the Savior

There are two types of awaiting the savior: one is legitimate while the other is not. The second type of

waiting is the one where we silently await the reappearance of the Imam and keep a look out for the signs of his reappearance.

[Some of these signs are as follows]: A cry from heaven, an eclipse, the emergence of the Sufyani and the Dajjal. I do not wish to lessen the importance of these signs since many traditions have been related regarding them in the collections of traditions (i.e. books relating to the sedition that will occur towards the end of time). It is true that most of these traditions have not been scrutinized [as to whether their chains of transmission are authentic or not] but I would still like to emphasize the fact that a large portion of them are in fact reliable. But I disagree with the method of awaiting the Imam in which one simply keeps watch over the events occurring in the world, waiting for the signs mentioned in these traditions to happen. I believe that this method turns the Islamic nation away from their responsibilities during the Occultation and causes them to forgo the obligations that lie on their shoulder when they are still waiting for the Imam to reappear.

The first method of waiting for the savior is legitimate. In it we find the following elements: action, movement, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil and calling people to the Path of God and struggling [to establish His rule on earth]. This is the greatest token of the dawn of the Mahdi and the most important factor contributing to hasten his reappearance. This is because the reappearance of the Imam depends for its existence on a number of divine norms governing history and society. These norms will not come into play without the action and movement [displayed by the believers themselves]. The signs that have been mentioned in these traditions are bound to

come true but these traditions do not say that the reappearance of the Imam will occur in such and such a time. As a matter of fact we have numerous traditions that curse those people who pin-point the time of the advent of the Imam.

Abdul Rahman ibn Katheer says the following: ***We were in the presence of Abu Abdullah (a.s)when Mahzam entered. He said to the Imam: "May I be sacrificed for you. Tell me about what we are awaiting (i.e. the advent of the Mahdi). When will it occur?" The Imam replied, "Oh Mahzam, the people who pin-point the time when the Mahdi will reappear are liars, and those who want it to occur before its proper time will perish."***[1]

Therefore, it is not true that these signs specify the time when the Imam will reappear. Rather, what is correct is that his advent is something that is related to our actions. So it is more accurate to say that the scream and the eclipse are signs of the reappearance but it is our actions that will fundamentally hasten it or postpone it. This explanation is necessary when we wish to comprehend the true nature of the reappearance, and this is the legitimate meaning of waiting for the savior.

A Rectification of the Meaning of Awaiting the Savior

We are living in an age where there is much discussion regarding the reappearance of the Imam. I do not know of an age in history when this much importance was given to the topic of the reappearance of the Imam and his government. Therefore "awaiting the savior" is one of the

1- *Ilzam un Nasib*: 1, 260.

distinctive qualities of our age. But, unfortunately, the masses have not been given a correct idea of what the concept of waiting for the Savior implies. Our youth discuss the reappearance of the Imam and its signs in occult texts, but I believe that this is an improper way of conversing about this topic. Rather, the advent of the Imam and the global revolution that he will lead is something that we should debate in our political and social circles.

The signs of the reappearance of the Imam do not exist in our books to the same extent that they can be seen in the reality that lies before us in our politics, our comprehension, our resistance against the unbelievers and the unity that we Muslims have today. [These are true signs that the advent of the Imam is near]. The way followed by many of our young ones, while discussing the signs of the reappearance of the Imam by skimming through the books related to this subject, is definitely a negative one. It is, therefore, necessary to rectify the meaning of awaiting the Mahdi in a more positive manner.

The difference between these two outlooks is that the first one makes the role of man in the advent of the Imam a negative one while the second one transforms his role into a more positive one. It allows him to be actively involved in the Imam's reappearance and connects it to our social reality as well as to the pleasures [that we enjoy] and difficulties [that we endure in this world].

It has been related from Moamar ibn Khallad from Abul Hasan (a.s) regarding the interpretation of the following

verse: ***"Alif, Lam, Mim. Do the people suppose that they will be let off because they say, 'We have faith,' and they will not be tested?"***[1] ***The Imam said: "They will be tested as gold is tested." Then he said: "They will be purified as gold is purified."***[2]

It has also been related by Mansur as Sayqal that he said: ***"I and Harith ibn Mughayrah (who was one of our companions) were sitting and Abu Abdullah (a.s) was with us. He said to us, "For what reason are you here! Go far away! I swear to God that what you are looking forward to will not come about until [the good from amongst you] is distinguished from [the bad]."***

It has also been related from Abu Abdullah (a.s) that he said: ***"Oh Mansur! This matter [i.e. the advent of the Imam will not come about until many have lost hope in it. No, I swear to God that [it will not come about until [the good from amongst you is separated from the truly evil]. No, I swear to God that it will not come about until the person destined to become evil becomes evil and the person destined to become good becomes good."***[3]

Therefore the advent of the Imam becomes something that is linked to our actions, the reality that surrounds us, the problems that afflict us, our success and our failure. It is more closely bound up with these things than it is to the various signs that have been mentioned in the books. This is a concept that must be pondered deeply over.

1- *Ankabut*: 1-2.
2- *Ilzam an Nasib*: 1, 261.
3- *Kafi*: 1, 370.

Who is Waiting for Whom? Are we waiting for the Imam or is he waiting for us?

According to this interpretation of the advent of the Imam the matter is reversed and the Imam becomes the one who is waiting for our movement, our resistance of the disbelievers and our struggle against them. It is not true that we are the ones who are awaiting his return. If it is true that the re-emergence of the Imam is connected to our political reality and the revolutionary movements that we start then we are the ones who can make this dream a reality. Concordantly we can prepare for the advent of the Mahdi by means of our actions, movements, unity, concord and enjoining what is right. It is also possible for us to postpone this event by means of our bad actions by running away from the responsibilities that lie on our shoulders.

The Value of Awaiting the Imam

This interpretation of awaiting the Imam is the one truly worthy of the great value that is given to it in the Islamic texts. It has been related that the Holy Prophet (s) said: ***"The best action that my nation can perform is that they await the Mahdi."***[1] It has also been related that he said: ***"Waiting for the advent of Imam Mahdi is an act of worship."*** And the following has also been related, ***"The person who awaits our return is like the one who has shed his blood [on the path of God]."***[2] The great value of awaiting the Mahdi, present in the traditions, is more concordant with the positive interpretation that we have given to it just now, while the most distant one is when it is interpreted as a vigil or observation."

1- *Ilzam an Nasib*: 1, 469.

2- *Ikmal ad Deen wa Itmam an Nimat*: 645.

There is a Relationship between Awaiting the Savior and the Revolutionary Movement

We have previously spoken about the relationship that exists between awaiting the Savior and the revolutionary movement [that is a prerequisite for its existence] and now we will discuss the connection that exists between this movement and awaiting the Savior.

The Revolutionary Movement

The revolutionary movement is one that is composed both of destruction and creation, [i.e. it seeks to destroy something old and create something new]. Because of this it is always joined with battle, struggle and difficulties. If it were true that this movement simply sought to create something new without destroying the previous edifice then it would not be intertwined with all this struggle and complications. The destruction that this movement seeks to cause is directed towards the existing political system. Now, every system has adherents that profit from it and, therefore, seek to defend it from its enemies. The invitation towards God's unity is a movement in the most precise sense of this word. It is because of this that it is paired with struggle and resistance. "***Fight them until faithlessness is no more, and religion becomes exclusively for Allah. But if they relinquish, Allah indeed sees best what they do.***"[1]

It is not possible for this ideology to find its way into the life of human beings without removing the sedition that enshrouds human society and battling against the political systems that polytheists benefit from. It is

1- *Anfal*: 37.

impossible to remove the sedition by means of inviting people to God's way unless and until we seek recourse to combat. This is so because God's Unity will not come into existence in a political and social vacuum but where polytheism is rampant. Hence, the invitation to God's Unity will never come to be unless the polytheism [that stands diametrically opposed to it] is removed.

The Counter-Reaction to the Revolutionary Movement

It is for this very reason that the leaders of infidelity spend everything at their disposal in order to prevent the revolutionary movement of Islam from progressing. They attempt to instigate corruption and despair [amongst the Muslims] and set up roadblocks on God's Path. The call to God's Unity demands removing this sedition and confronting the leaders of polytheism. It is the resistance and conflict with the polytheistic powers that brings difficulties upon the lives, families and wealth of the people who are invite others to God's Path. It entails undergoing much hardship and loss.

The Responsibility to Begin the Revolutionary Movement

It is for this reason that the Qur'an emphasizes the responsibility of starting the revolutionary movement. If it were not for the fact that this movement entailed much suffering and adversity there would be no reason for so much emphasis. God says, ***"Be watchful of your prayers, and [especially] the middle prayer, and stand in obedience to Allah."***[1]

1- *Baqarah*: 238.

"O my son! Maintain the prayer and bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and be patient through whatever may visit you. That is indeed the steadiest of courses."[1]

"So be steadfast, just as you have been commanded—[you] and whoever has turned [to Allah] with you—and do not overstep the bounds. Indeed He sees best what you do."[2]

"Read in the Name of your Lord who created [Man];"[3]

"O Prophet! Wage jihad against the faithless and the hypocrites, and be severe with them. Their refuge shall be hell, and it is an evil destination."[4]

"Indeed those who have become faithful and those who have migrated and waged jihad in the way of Allah—it is they who expect Allah's mercy, and Allah is All-forgiving, All-merciful."[5]

"Go forth, whether [armed] lightly or heavily, and wage jihad with your possessions and persons in the way of Allah. That is better for you, should you know."[6]

"And kill them wherever you confront them, and expel them from where they expelled you, for faithlessness is graver than killing. But do not fight them near the Holy Mosque unless they fight you therein; but if they fight

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1- *Luqman*: 17.
2- *Hud*: 112.
3- *Alaq*: 1.
4- *Towbah*: 73.
5- *Baqarah*: 218.
6- *Towbah*: 41.

you, kill them; such is the requital of the faithless."[1]

"Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed Allah does not like transgressors."[2]

"Fight them until faithlessness is no more, and religion becomes exclusively for Allah. But if they relinquish, Allah indeed sees best what they do."[3]

These are all revolutionary teachings aimed to direct people to change the [polytheistic] reality around them and replace it with Divine Monotheism, and also remove the barriers and roadblocks that stand in the way of the call to God's Path.

The Weakness of Man

Man finds in himself restricted and unable to confront all the difficulties and problems [that surround him on his own]. This is because the battle that wages between the armies of Divine Unity and Polytheism is a major one. Man cannot confront these minions alone (or even with his comrades in faith). To overcome this weakness and disadvantage he takes hold of the [chord] of God. Attempting to make up for the weaknesses inherent in man is [how we surmount] the first roadblock that lies in the Path of God. This weakness appears as fear of tyrants and oppressors, fatigue from moving on His Path, despair on not being able to continue on that, love of ease and security and the likes of these. The people who stray away from the Straight Path are those who are unable to supplement their power with that of God's.

1- *Baqarah*: 191.
2- *Baqarah*: 190.
3- *Anfal*: 39.

How can we Protect Ourselves from Straying away from the Straight Path

It is absolutely necessary for us to discuss the factors that will protect us from straying off the Straight Path and will guard us from the insinuations of the Shaytan. What are those things that will make up for the inherent weakness in our selves? The means by which we can protect ourselves from these perils are numerous but the four most important ones have been mentioned in the Qur'an:

1. Taking help [from God] by means of patience and prayer

2. The guardianship [that the believers exercise over one another]

3. Inheritance

4. Awaiting the Mahdi

1- Taking Help from Patience and Prayer

God says: ***"And take recourse in patience and prayer, and it is indeed hard except for the humble."***[1]

And He also says: ***"And do not call those who were slain in Allah's way 'dead.' Rather they are living, but you are not aware."***[2]

In Surah Hud, God strengthens the heart of His Prophet (s) in the midst of a dangerous battle with the leaders of polytheism in the Arabian Peninsula. In this Surah, God expounds the way of Divine Unity and then says to him:

1- *Baqarah*: 45.
2- *Baqarah*: 153.

"So be steadfast, just as you have been commanded—[you] and whoever has turned [to Allah] with you—and do not overstep the bounds. Indeed He sees best what you do. And do not incline toward the wrongdoers; lest the Fire should touch you, and you will not have any friend besides Allah, then you will not be helped. Maintain the prayer at the two ends of the day, and during the early hours of the night. Indeed good deeds efface misdeeds. That is an admonition for the mindful. And be patient; indeed Allah does not waste the reward of the virtuous."[1]

Patience means to bring into being the Divine Norms. The battle in essence has taken place because of the Divine norms and therefore the person who wishes to be victorious in this battle must understand what these laws and norms are and then bring [those norms into being that are necessary for his victory] into existence. He must thus match the military power that the enemy has in battle, his political strength or his scientific know-how.

Patience does not imply that we silently bear the injuries that the enemy inflicts upon us. It necessitates that we struggle and remain steadfast in the face of the inconveniences that he puts upon us. It demands that we not run away from confronting him and continue in this way until we are able to send him fleeing in defeat with a strength that matches his own. This is the positive meaning of Patience.

Patience manifests the connection that we have with God and is proportionate to the extent that we remember Him.

1- *Hud*: 112-115.

The Muslim who finds himself in the midst of battle has no choice but to place his trust in God and seek out His help. He must remember Him much and ask Him for strength, power and valor. In the parlance of the Qur'an, he must "attach his rope to the Rope of God." If man attaches his rope to that of God's in the midst of battle then he will never be afraid or weaken in the face of the enemy and this is the true meaning of patience and prayer.

2- The Guardianship [that the believers exercise over one another]

Muslims resemble various threads that make up a single garment. This is an organic connection that we call "guardianship". This is a guardianship that is horizontal, in opposition to the guardianship of God, His Prophet (s) and His Friends (a.s), which is vertical in nature. It is to this organic unity (that connects Muslims with one another) that the following verse alludes to: ***"But the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another: they bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and maintain the prayer, give the zakat, and obey Allah and His Apostle. It is they to whom Allah will soon grant His mercy. Indeed Allah is All-mighty, All-wise."***[1] It is this unison that forms the Muslims into one interconnected whole. This guardianship includes helping one another, sharing in the responsibilities that we have, assisting each other and being at peace with one another.

The nation that thus is interconnected with one another in such a strong fashion will be unbreakable in the midst of

1- *Towbah*: 71.

battle. It is the wisdom of God that has ordained the basis of the relationship between the citizens of the Islamic nation to be guardianship. This is because the connection that it is able to create between members of a nation is the most solid one possible.

Since the primary responsibility of this nation is to face the enemy in the battle that wages between faith and infidelity, it must have a strong internal infrastructure so that it can withstand the onslaughts that beset it from all directions in this war. Without the guardianship that intertwines Muslims with each other, Muslims will not be able to resist the armies of hypocrisy and infidelity in this decisive battle. Such a unified nation will have indeed taken hold of "the chord of God" and transformed itself into a unified whole while facing the leaders of disbelief: ***"Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord, and do not be divided [into sects]. And remember Allah's blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together."***[1]

In this verse, God first orders all believers to hold unto the chord of God in the midst of battle. This is because war demands that each one of the two sides summon all its power. Now the power of this nation lies in two things: Clinging unto the chord of God and the unity of all members of society in this matter.

3- Inheritance

It is also necessary that the members of the army of God remember and understand the historical roots of this revolution to gain more power and strength. This great

1- *Aale Imran*: 103.

movement is not something new. It started with Adam, then, continued in the form of the [struggles of the prophets] Noah (a.s) and Ibrahim (a.s) until it finally reached the Prophet of God (s). This revolution possesses the profundity and depth and has been waging against the leaders of disbelief and infidelity throughout the ages. The "tree" of Divine Unity is an excellent Olive tree, whose roots are firm and whose branches extend into the heavens.

"Have you not regarded how Allah has drawn a parable? A good word is like a good tree: its roots are steady and its branches are in the sky. It bears fruit every season by the leave of its Lord. Allah draws these parables for mankind so that they may take admonition."[1]

Polytheism and disbelief is also a "tree", but one that has been uprooted from the ground and that lacks the stability [necessary to bear fruit]. It is therefore absolutely necessary for the members of the Party of God to recall when the seeds of their revolution were historically planted, and the connection that it has with the Truthful, Righteous and Obedient servants that lived in times immemorial.

It is for this hidden reason that when we salute the Doyen of the Martyrs, Imam Husain (a.s), we acknowledge the fact that his revolution was in fact an inheritance that he received from his fore-fathers. Finally, Prophet Muhammad (s) [gave it to his grandson Husain (a.s) to complete]: We say:

1- *Ibrahim*: 24-25.

"Peace be upon you, O inheritor of Adam, the one chosen by God. Peace be upon you, O inheritor of Noah, the prophet of God. Peace be upon you, O inheritor of Ibrahim, the friend of God."

It is therefore incumbent on man to recollect in the midst of battle the depths of this revolution. It is this remembrance that will protect and shield him in this deadly battle.

4- Awaiting the Mahdi and the Hope [that it begets]

Awaiting the savior is the fourth factor that causes man to move forward [on the Path of God]. Waiting for the Mahdi creates hope in man's soul which gives birth to the power that will allow him to struggle on God's Path. By way of example, the drowning person who is waiting for the lifeguards to rescue him has twice the strength of the person who has lost all hope of someone saving him.

Faith in the idea that the Righteous Ones will inherit the earth, that the downtrodden believers will eventually become the leaders of the world and that the end will be in favor of the pious, grants power and strength to the pious and righteous servants of God and makes their footsteps firm in the battlefield. It grants them the strength necessary to face difficulties and to confront the enemy in the most constrained of situations. It prevents them from fleeing the theatre of war even in the most cumbersome of situations.

It is for this very reason that the Qur'an places great stress on this reality [i.e. hope]: ***"Moses said to his people, 'Turn to Allah for help and be patient. The***

earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomever He wishes of His servants, and the outcome will be in favor of the God-wary.'"[1] It also emphasizes the fact that the righteous servants will inherit the earth as God had mentioned before in the Psalms of David.

"Certainly, We wrote in the Psalms after the Torah: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.'"[2]

It is because of the importance of this reality, the necessity to emphasize it and plant it in the depths of the believers' souls, and because the intellectual structure of Islam depends on it, that God has repeated it in both the Psalms and the Qur'an. God has repeatedly mentioned the fact that the oppressed ones will inherit the earth and hold the reins of human society. This fact has been admitted by God and been confirmed by Him as being definite, but if, and only if, the oppressed ones obey God's commands and accept what He has invited them to (i.e. faith and righteous deeds).

God says the following in the Holy Qur'an: ***"And We desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs, and to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts from them, that of which they were apprehensive."***[3]

1- *A'raf*: 128.
2- *Anbiya*: 105.
3- *Qasas*: 5-6.

Even though these two verses were revealed about Moses (a.s), the Pharaoh and Haman, the desire of God to place the oppressed and deprived people at the head of affairs of society is absolute and not conditional (i.e. it is not specifically meant for the Children of Israel). It only depends upon the fact that the believers accept what God invites them towards; faith and good actions. The promise that God has made to make the oppressed and downtrodden believers the leaders of men gives these people strength and a sense of ease. It grants them the ability to bear with patience the difficulties that accrue in struggling on God's Path and makes their feet firm on the battlefield. It resembles the person who waits to be saved [from drowning and is absolutely sure that he will be]. This surety gives birth to hope in the souls of the believers who stand in the midst of battle with the Pharaohs of their age in the same way that Moses (a.s), the prophet of God, strengthened his nation when they were faced by enemies by reminding them of the promise that God had made to them and by asking them to wait for His help.

Ponder over these verses from the blessed Surah A'raf:

"***Moses said to his people, 'Turn to Allah for help and be patient. The earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomsoever He wishes of His servants, and the outcome will be in favour of the God-wary.' They said, 'We were tormented before you came to us and [also] after you came to us.' He said, 'Maybe your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the land, and then He will see how you***

act.'"[1] In these verses Moses (a.s) attempts to inculcate a sense of hope in the Children of Israel when they were faced with the enemies and to remind them of the promise that God had made to save them. He wishes to remind them of the great promise:

It is indeed strange that Moses (a.s) paired patience with waiting for the promise of God to come true when he said, "***Turn to Allah for help and be patient. The earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomsoever He wishes of His servants.***" But it was at this point that the Children of Israel attempted to turn the attention of their prophet from the [glorious] future [promised to them] to the bitterness of the present. Thus they said: "***We were tormented before you came to us and [also] after you came to us."*** After this Moses once again reminded them of his surety in the fulfillment of the promise of God and the necessity to remain patient when afflicted by difficulties until God finally opens up the door of salvation. ***"He said, 'Maybe your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the land, and then He will see how you act."***

Therefore God wishes to strengthen the [Islamic] nation by means of the inheritance that they have received from the past believers and also by ordering them to await the salvation that the Savior will bring. This is the inheritance of the prophets and the righteous ones to wait for the promise of God to be fulfilled. This naturally will happen when He opens the doors of deliverance and allows the righteous believers to take hold of the reigns of power. The revolutionary movement of Divine Unity

1- *A'raf*: 128-129.

is one that is surrounded from one side by the law of inheritance and on the other by that of waiting for the Mahdi. They are the two most important pillars of the Revolutionary movement of Divine Unity that is traversing its long and difficult path. It is crucial that we inculcate within ourselves these two fundamental elements of Qur'anic culture, i.e. inheritance and awaiting the savior.